Dear Howard, 8/17/72

This will be one of those "fatherly" letters intended to inform you. It is also intended as a substitute for what I do not keep, a journal. Most writers do. If I had not been so deep in so much work, perhaps I also would have. Because I have not, much of what should have been recorded isn't. Small incidents sometimes, later, assume more meaning.

It is a consequence of one of those letters most of you dislike or resent, one of my more impassioned. Like the one that led to the biggest and first major ant-Commission story we ever had and that at a crucial time, the Post's 5/31/66 story in which I was so wretchedly double-crosses, it is a letter to the Post that brought about what I will report, yet to be published, but an exceptional s ory as it now stands. I've seen but two of the 25 pages.

It is on me, something I have never sought and didn't expect this one to be.

So, while I'm reminding you of the philosophy of Ecclestiastes again, I realize it is also a kind of selfOjustification, for something for which, in some cases at least, I have been properly criticized. I am admitting that all my angry letter might not have been of this kind and had some not been they might have produced what they didn't. On the other hand, as I think you know, none of the major accomplish,ents that come to mind had any other origin. I leave it an open question for others to decided for I can't undo the past and don't relive it where it can be avoided.

I am pretty sure you've gone through my Post file. If so, you know the think that opened it up then was my cutting up of Al Friendly, then the managing editor. I think the files are less clear on the reflection of the internal staff struggle that led to still another double-cross, helped get a great reporter fired, resulyed in a change in the line of the story that appeared, and formed Post opinion for the sneuing years. I have a secret suspicion that Ben Bradlee was a chieftan of the winning side.

You know that recently I have kept after him, in some cases rather bluntly. The letter that I think reared him back a bit was the response to his stupid one telling me how great Lattimer is. This was our first knowledge of the long Lattimer piece we later got. You know I have him a direct confrontation challenge and a few citations later of the egregious error and deliberate dishonesty. Or, he was partly hook. I then followed this up with a less intemperate complaint about one of the endless articles on shrunks not in a position to practise shrinkery offering opinions that amount to a solicitation to nuts to kill. With this I enclosed a carbon of a simplified piece I had written about the "Can Mr. Weisbegr Translate" threat, using it as an illustration.I asked that he give it to Paul Valentine when he finished with it. Then I forgot about it. I didn't even ask Paul if he'd gotten it and, in fact, had seen Paul infrequently and briefly only during that time.

I guess it was about two months later that I got a phone call from a man of whom I'd never heard, Donald Smith. He identified himself as managing editor of the Sunday mag., Potomac. He had this piece and wnated to talke to me about it and later about me. We had hours of phone conversations and he later come up for a relatively short visit of a couple of hours. I had told him the things I'd tell him in giving him honest answers might seem farout, so I thought he should ask to see whatever he would like to see. I was, however, a bit surprised at his interest in me. But I didn't ask him why, although I felt it was inconsistent with interest in the piece I had written, and as I am with everyone, I was fully frank. I here warn you that this can lead to diagnosis of exactly the opposite. The really open person today, if he leads a life at all outside the norm, can get himself classified a delusionary, schozo or even paranoid. Anyway, as we got into these things in my past I told him I'd was willing to talk about them but I'd prefer that he not write about them. He agreed. When he persisted and I didn't want to not be frabk, I stipulated that the article not include these political things, that I'd answer all his questions and volunteer what I could anticipate was in his mind, but only with the clear understanding that these not be in whatever story he was going to write and that he in no case use the name of another without the approval of that person . There were some names I didn't give him where I felt that there moght, if only slightly, be adverse personal reactions. He agreed. So, I told all-even how I was a British spy in WWII and how I got to be, etc. About the fights of my past, including several really rough ones, etc. When I realized how it was going, except where I forgot to turn cassettes, which was often, I thought it would be a good idea, not having ever made a record on these things, to tape, and I did. But only about three hours of all this are on tape.

Well, last Friday we were in DC. I took part of a tearing up of the May habeas corpus

petition to Bud. I had to go to town anyway and I wanted him to ease some of the pressures off of Jim, who is under too many and it shows too much in his drafts. (He has finished the third and I'll be clobbering it, alas, with still more waste of time) There was a story I had given Paul. I called him and he invited Lil and me to lunch at the Post with him. As we were walking to the cafeteria, he volunteered that he had just seen a good story on me. Whose and where, I asked, and he said Smith's ms. "It told me something of your past I didn't know", he said, so not ever having had occasion to go into my past with Paul, I asked him what. "That 1940 red-baiting", he told me. I let it go at that.

Having been interrupted, I digress for a slight lecture-illumination and what I hope you will not misunderstand as boasting. The thing to which Paul referred, I later learned, was one of two really tough fiths I won. Both were abolsultely impossible, but I won them btoh. Both were also against overwhelming odds, and I could have won neither alone. The first, one Smith left out, is where the UnAmericans actually passed a law against me then tried to hot me indicted and I took the grand-jury people away from them and got the Unamerican agent indicted instead. This would have been impossible if Lil had not interposed her judgement over that of an older associate they were also after. This man was established, respected and of powerful friends, all of whom abandoned him in this fight. Including cabinet members and one Supreme Court Justice I met with him. I wasn't too much older than you then. I was out of town, Lil turned Mata Hari, phoned me, I rushed back and lo! virtue was triumphant. It hasn't ever happened, only that once. The guy got two years and I remained Mr. Clean. Why Smith, if he was going to use anything like this, and I felt we had a contrary understanding, elected the second I don't know. That was the first major security case. I fought it like none of those subsequently did and again, because of the different kind of fighting, won. The of us use unceremoniously fired under a wierd law that required no reason or explanation and permitted no recourse. Imagine fighting that one! And imagine having to whip nine others, mostly timid scholars, into line to do it. In some cases it involved finding some way of convincing their wives. And then, with no resources, I had to get counsel. We wound up with unpaid counsel of Arnold, Fortas and Poeter. The one of these names that will mean anything to you is Abe Dortas. He did great then. Most of the real work was done by an employee, but the partners (Arnold knew me from his Justice days) all pichted in with impirtant contact work.

In looking bak on this and so many other things, if I were ever to wrtie an autobiography, which I have never co sidered, it should be titled "Impossible!" Even in OSS that was always my job and I can't remember a failure. The difference between success and failure is generally the approach, which is the only way of overcoming steep odds.

Anyway, I phoned Smith on getting home. Lil overheard my end and handed me a note saying that she'd rather have no story than one of the kind my side of the conversation indicated. Meanwhile, from Paul I had the description of this truly exceptional length and I know that more than a half-million copies are printed and go to an effective audience, so I was torn. I worked out a compromise, that we'd go over the objectionable part and see if the hurtful stuff could come out of be changed without his feeling his integrity was as stake. I told him quite frankly that after he and I discussed this, if Lil had the slightest doubt, I'd want no story. He had said the choice might be this. He admitted learning of me that I never seek personal publicity and had turned it down when it served no other point.

We got together Tuesday and there were no real problems. How nuts will take what remains and the additions only time will tell. Lil is satisfied, and that's what makes the difference to me. Here there was a major interruption of a family problem and I have to stop for a while. There was a special point I don't think I'll fogget but if it is not made when I can resume, remind me.

If my watch hadn't been wrong, I'd not have started this. I thought I'd have enough time before waking Lil to finish it and there isn't the kind of light I need for the work I plan so early in the a.m., particularly when it is raining.

We got a phone call that awakened Lil and discusses the family problem with the nephew who last night, all by himself, passed through a crisis rather well and shows a gratifying response to the time spent with him. But it was a bad night for his mother. Not until after this did I learn my watch had lost almost an hour.

I don't know what the story is yet. I didn't ask. I did say I was surprised that a story on the threat and my handling of the piece I wrote led him to so much on me and he said he has that threat in, so I left it that way. I don't regard it as right to ask a writer what he has written if he doesn't volunteer nor did I ask to go over other things.

I did learn that he seems to have spent a considerable amount of effort on this. And when I pointed out the potential harm in what he had read me after I'd quoted Paul 's comment on it he said he thought the story would have a good effect.

When I got to his office he had been locked out. He is one of the couple who have private offices. Everybody else was working. So, we went to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee until he could get in. On the way down he told me he had called Sylvia, the point I didn't want to forget.

In earlier conversations he had indicated that he'd phoned a number of people about me. Wlater had told me he'd been phoned and had gotten a good impression. It seems that everyone spoke well. The man through whom I did this work for the British during WWII, in economic intelligence, where I gave them my investigative work, was then in Justice and is now an established and Establishmentarian lawyer. He seems to have described me as a paint-toucher and to have offered the opinion that society requires pait-touchers.

Smith said that Syvlia had spoken well of me. I hadn't mentioned Sylvia's name to him, so he has done his own checking, outside the names of those I'd mentioned as helping on the threat or as those of past relationships. What she said, as he reflected it, is interesting. She decribed me or my work as "brilliant" and the part that I found most interesting is that she said I had one important thing in particular. He asked what that was and I had already shown it to him, when he was here. Here I find a subconsciousthing Sylvia has done. I am aware of the kindness of her comment. I am asking you to focus on this one thing. Bear in mind that she has read the two earlier parts of PM. But the one thing she seems to have singled out is the one thing on which she requires self-justification. She knows of more of the content of the new last part and she has to know I could write a book-length part on just one dicument. I may be reading this wrong, and when one tries to plumb the mind, the thing gets pretty tenuous and one is easily deceived or deceives ones-self. But she could have instead said what she told me about the panel part, for one example. Of all the things she could have said, I find it fascinating that this is the one. Or at least the one that stuck in his mind. I am not complaining, and I have no complaint. Rather I am trying to analyze. I think she just would not acknowledge to herself that I am as free and open as I am, pe haps even hoped this would entice Smith to want to print that document. He couldn't have cared less than he did about this or any other evidence. And this is a point I've been trying to make to all of you. It need not reflect his personal opinion, and like most things, it can't be universally applied as a generality from which there can't be departure. But he knows and understands his own paper and its shibboleths.

Well, we'll see what emerges and what its results. I've made no effort to learn what the story says and will be content to see it when it comes out. He is not finished. He has agreed to give a special point to the framed security fighting by using it to show how I am particularly sensitive to such official framings, and that is relevent to any such story. I was surprised that he had actually looked up the incredible law under which this was done and recalled its provisions. So, he was willing to sharpen and cleanse that part, which makes it come out an UnAmerican law and a rather exceptional accomplishment in overturning the firings because there was no legal recourse and no compulsion that it be done.

When I was a ("controversial") high-school editor (and won the grand prix of the day, the Columbia School of Journalism top award) it was a to me not hoborable principle of public relatoons that when the department store woner was accused of rape, his concern should not be for the reporting but for the correct spelling of his name. I don't regard mention as such an end in itself, regardless of the nature of the mention. And you do know the nature of my correspondence with all at the Post. There is nothing in it to endear me. During this interval, by the way, I had several accidental meetings with those who were part of the nastiness of 1966, Larry Stern, now an editor, then national editor, and Dick Harwood, then a reporter, the one who wrote the story under really difficult circumstances and now national editor. Dick came all accross the newsroom to be friendly last time he saw me, kind of a change. So, in doing any kind of story except an ax job, the Post is overcoming a long-fixed position. If it turns out to be a favorable story, regardless of whether or not it is helpful to me, I think it will be quite important, especially at this juncture.

I have no idea of when it will or can appear. I imagine they have about a three-week spread on the roto parts of the paper. And I know that this incredibly-long story is going to be lengthened, and there has as yet been no discussion of pictures. For example, because I was then in the State Dept, there is point he immediately saw in State's reaction to my challenege to Khruschev to peaceful competition in poultry. And you can now see my need for that file. He is going to insert a note that State itself was so little troubled by its act that it asked me to go to the USSR and teach them how to raise better chickens. It did. He is going to add something on the geese-for-peace project. And it begins with 25 pages? It is different in a magazine, but this is really astounding length. He'll have to cut, I'm sure. Paul also was surprised at the length and has the same opinion.

So, we'll see what comes out and what it does, if anything. If it is not unfavorable, and even if nothing flows from it, it will change the attitudes of some people, and this includes some of the more influential, toward us, or some of us, anyway.

As I left I stopped off to give Bob Woodward the Hunt bio chart I am enclosing. He was not there so I asked for anyone else working on the story. I thus met Carl Bernstein. I had known his dad in the 30s, when his dad was also the victim of such evil. His dad helped Max Lowenthal on one of the best research jobs and books on the FBI, had earlier been a Senate investigator. His career was ruined by the vilifications and he is now some kind of salesman. I was disappointed at Carl's lack of indication of even slight affection for his dad or indication of sympathy for his suffering of the period in which I knew him. He doesn't remember it or me, but when he was a kid, he ate my eggs and my chickens. Anyway, he said keep those memos coming; they are great and they help our understanding. He seems to agree with some of the theories and to be seeking support for them. I said there had been more since the last I'd sent him but when Woodward couldn't find time to send me a promised story that hadn't made the early edition why the hell should I do for nothing what they got paid for doing, that cooperation was a two-way thing. I was coming in anyway, so I brought this in, but I wouldn't go to trouble unless they were willing to reciprocate. At this point Woodward came in and Carl told him. Woodward apologized for forgetting, and I don't for a minute think he forgot, and went to his desk and got me his file copy and said he'd replace it for himself. I wasn't arroagent or angry or objectionable. But I made my point and it was accepted. I don't kid myself into believing they'll do what they should have once they saw my grasp of the story and its potential, check with me as they go to see if I know what can help. But maybe there will be some changes.I tried to get Bernstein to get state of the Cuban-Americans for Nixon-Agnew reports for the 1968 campiagn, to give me a set so I could go over them for him. He likes the idea but I don't think he'll make the slight effort. We'll have to wait and see on that, too.

Anyway, gotta stop. Think about these things and see if you can draw any conclusions from them.

Smith said Tuesday that the Cyrilling is still set for next week and still for two days. I asked nothing further and he volunteered nothing further. Best,